

by Rep. Steve King

On December 18, 2007, then presidential candidate Barack Obama leveled the first of dozens of heavy criticisms against President George W. Bush. In a speech in Des Moines, Obama blasted President Bush for taking his “eye off the ball in Afghanistan.” He continued: “It’s time to...increase our military, political, and economic commitment to Afghanistan. That’s what...I’ll do as president.”

This was Barack Obama’s first “eye off the ball” speech. It was the beginning of a barrage of campaign speeches accusing the Bush administration of “taking our eye off of Osama bin Laden” (Denver, 1/30/08).

On July 15, 2008 in Washington, D.C., then Senator Obama vowed to deploy “the full force of American power to hunt down and destroy Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda, the Taliban, and all of the terrorists responsible for 9/11.” In fact, Barack Obama specifically used the name of Osama bin Laden at least 40 times in speeches during his Presidential campaign while definitively pledging to focus all necessary resources against bin Laden, al Qaeda and the Taliban in the countries where they live and operate.

On November 3, 2008, the day before his election, Obama delivered for the last time as a candidate his oft repeated promise, “I will finally finish the fight against bin Laden and the al Qaeda terrorists who attacked us on 9/11. I will never hesitate to defend this nation.”

More than a year has passed since Obama was elected. Since that date, we have seen a distinct contrast between candidate Obama and Commander-in-Chief Obama. Candidate Obama seldom failed to rail against the war in Iraq - the “war of choice” - and seldom failed to burnish his national security credentials by railing against bin Laden. As he said repeatedly before his election, “I have no greater priority than taking out these terrorists who threaten America, and finishing the job against the Taliban. I will never hesitate to defend this nation!”

President Obama has now hesitated for a full three months since General McChrystal requested more troops in Afghanistan and said failing to do so risked an outcome that “will likely result in failure.” A Commander-in-Chief must be decisive in time of war. The lives of our troops, the destiny of our nation and that of the free world is at stake.

Well before January 20, 2009 when he took the presidential oath of office, Obama swore an oath to defend America at home and abroad. When he became a US Senator, Obama took the Congressional oath which says, *"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter: So help me God."*

In every case, campaign rhetoric and national security policy merge the moment we elect a president. In this case, quite specifically, President Obama's Congressional oath and campaign promises were merged by his taking the oath of office of President.

A President's oath of office is set by the Constitution: *"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."* To fulfill that oath, a president must defend our nation against all the enemies of the Constitution. Osama bin Laden is one, beyond any quibble or doubt. And when a president is elected, he becomes accountable for the promises he made.

When he became president, the presidential oath required Obama to recommit to those principles. Thousands of Americans gave him their vote in full faith that Obama would keep faith with them and make good on his solemn vow to defeat bin Laden and al Qaeda.

Today, it has become completely obvious that President Obama has taken his eye off the very ball that he defined as candidate Obama. As President, he has virtually stopped talking about defeating Osama bin Laden.

In the year since elected, during the dozens of speeches and press conferences he has given as president and in dramatic contrast with his own persistent and repetitive warnings about "taking our eye off of Osama bin Laden," Obama has uttered the name bin Laden only four times. It is even more significant that not once since his election has Obama repeated his oath to "finish the fight against bin Laden and the al Qaeda terrorists."

American fighting forces are by far the best fighting forces the world has ever

seen. They alone among the troops of the world defend and advance the cause of liberty for the sake of all who yearn to be free. Defeat, retreat or failure is not a political decision for them.

They have written a blank check to the Commander-in-Chief for a value up to and including their very lives. Our troops know they will one day come home, boots on or boots off. They are not deployed to dither.

Their very nobility requires a decision from the President who said, "This is a war that we have to win."

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